

Mr. Jose Antonio Ramirez

CITY MANAGER
The City of Firebaugh, California

Written Testimony
As a Member of the Local/Regional Government Elected Officials Panel

Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force

WEST SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

July 18, 2008

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE:

It is an honor and privilege to appear before the Delta Vision Task Force. I am glad to accept your kind invitation to offer my comments on the first staff draft of the Delta Strategic Plan that the Governor directed the Task Force to submit this year. Dealing with so many challenges and issues as presented by the Bay-Delta Estuary is an immense undertaking. Although it is difficult to get my arms around the draft your staff has submitted, I appreciate this opportunity. I will present a few comments on this preliminary draft from the perspective of our small San Joaquin Valley community and offer what I see as the more important issues – those related to the economic and social catastrophe occurring in our community and along the West Side because of Delta problems and water supply cutbacks. I am grateful for your permission to submit this expanded written testimony along with the oral testimony.

I am Jose Antonio Ramirez. For the past 5½ years, I have served as the City Manager of the City of Firebaugh in Fresno County, California. My duties also include serving as the city's Economic Development Director and Airport Manager for our community of 6,000 people. Along with managing daily city operations and all aspects of economic

development activities, I am responsible for the city's annual budget preparation and final budget implementation. From 2000-2003, I served as City Administrator and Planning Director of another small, rural Fresno County community, the City of Orange Cove. In both Firebaugh and Orange Cove, I have been acutely aware of negative economic and social impacts created by problems in the local agricultural industries – including effects of severe freeze damage and water supply curtailments. I am also able to view difficult water supply and related issues from a federal perspective, having served from 1997-2000 in a variety of positions within the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, an Interior Department Agency that administers the Central Valley Project (CVP).

Our western Fresno County city, although some 100 miles removed from the Delta and all of its problems, is directly impacted by what does, or does not, occur within that estuary. Since the irrigation water delivered to farms along the West Side is pumped and exported from the Delta, recent court-ordered curtailments of water exports through pumping and possibility of additional supply reductions have created elements of a perfect storm that has now converged upon us. The resulting prospects, to say the least, are grim. If this sounds familiar, please permit me to acknowledge that we have been sounding the alarm in our neck of the woods for a very long time. I would like to focus on the social and economic woes that have been created because of the lack of a comprehensive water plan in this state.

In general, it is my opinion that the first staff draft of the Delta Vision Report does an extremely good job of examining the big picture. Unfortunately, it also becomes too detailed and attempts to propose specific remedies for what needs to get done, especially in addressing ecosystems. Unfortunately, such proposed or suggested solutions frequently lack scientific data to demonstrate that they will work.

I wish to discuss the draft report in the context of how these issues affect the City of Firebaugh and its surrounding rural, agricultural community. Our community is small but has a rich San Joaquin Valley history. Incorporated in 1914, Firebaugh has grown from a lonely ferry crossing to a small agriculturally-based city. Before the arrival of the railroad in the late 1880s, the San Joaquin River was a significant thoroughfare to the central and northern San Joaquin Valley. Firebaugh is one of the oldest towns on the West Side. Along with a rich agricultural base, diversity has been developing Firebaugh. New growth in manufacturing, packing and processing plants has enhanced Firebaugh's economic outlook. The river itself continues to flow alongside our city, making us the jewel of the San Joaquin.

The City of Firebaugh is located in western Fresno County, approximately 43 miles northwest of Fresno. Our city borders the San Joaquin River and Madera County. It is surrounded by highly productive farmland that is, like virtually all cropland within the San Joaquin Valley, brought to life through irrigation. Major crops grown in the area include fruits, vegetables, nuts and fiber crops including tomatoes, garlic, cantaloupes and cotton. Our farmers contribute mightily toward not only feeding and clothing our nation, but the world.

The farming areas within the immediate Firebaugh area are served by agencies that are members of the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority. The Exchange Contractors are supplied by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation with water pumped from the Delta near Tracy and delivered to Mendota Pool on the San Joaquin River through the Delta-Mendota Canal. These deliveries are made to provide the Exchange Contractors with a substitute supply of water so that their historic supplies from the San Joaquin River can be diverted upstream at Friant Dam for use in the CVP's Friant Division along the valley's East Side. Many Firebaugh residents are employed and much local business activity occurs – directly or indirectly – as a result of these farming interests. To a lesser but still very important extent, the same is true for local residents and businesses whose economic well being is supported by farming activities within the CVP's San Luis Unit, closer to the Coast Range along the valley's western fringes, west and south of Firebaugh.

Agriculture is the foundation for Firebaugh's economy and social structure. Much of the community's early history involved an important role as a "company town" for the legendary farming company Miller & Lux. At that time, Firebaugh was a place for those involved in farming to live and trade. It was also a shipping center for rail transport and, to a lesser extent, riverboat transport. Firebaugh long ago ceased to be dependent upon a single farming entity (such as Miller & Lux), but it still relies upon agriculture. The Western Growers organization tells us that for every direct farm job, there are six non-farm jobs. Revenue from agriculture turns over repeatedly through the local economy. If the business of farming is somehow curtailed, the numbers of positions offered by agriculture are quickly reduced.

I emphasize this because such a situation is already occurring. The unemployment rate in the City of Firebaugh is greater than the state average hovering around 24% during the winter months and dips to 12% during the harvest season. However due to the current water crisis we estimate the job loss to be around 36%.

There is no question that much of these unacceptably high jobless rates are resulting from effects of reductions in water supplies, particularly within lands irrigated by the CVP's nearby San Luis Unit, south and west of Firebaugh. The first of these reductions began in the early 1990s when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation attempted to comply with the Endangered Species Act by reducing Delta water exports. Those reductions instantly worsened effects of a critical six year drought period (from 1987-92) and were followed by the 1992 passage of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. The CVPIA ultimately had the effect of transferring some 1.2 million acre-feet of CVP water to environmental uses each year. Next occurred the drainage settlement under which a tremendous amount of land within the Westlands Water District, south of Firebaugh, is being retired. With each action occurred a corresponding decrease in employment as farmland went out of production.

There have been other unfortunate factors at work as well, including frequent periods in which farm commodity prices for various crops have been low while production costs

have continued to soar (most recently due to the explosion in fuel and other energy costs). Because of the simple economic rules of supply and demand, many growers have found it to be advantageous to treat water like land or crops – as a commodity that can be traded, bartered or sold. That is especially true today with reports of some water sales commanding up to \$1,000 per acre-foot. In such cases, the beneficial use of the water has been lost and steered instead to the most economic use (at least to the end user making the sale). Other third parties, such as farm workers and those involved with farm-related support businesses, suffer when income and jobs are lost.

What has the potential of turning out to be the nail in our economic coffin started to be pounded upon us in 2007 when U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger of Fresno invalidated the biological opinion covering Delta water export pumping operations. The court ordered preparation by September 15, 2008, of a new biological opinion. This biological opinion is to be prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the Delta smelt, a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (and now proposed to be listed as an endangered species). The court later ordered interim curtailments of Delta water export pumping until the new biological opinion is completed and accepted. Between the court's mandate and effects of the drought, crop and revenue, and job and income, losses within the San Luis Unit have gone through the roof, making what had been extremely bad economic conditions and deteriorating social situations in communities such as Firebaugh and nearly all other portions of the West Side just plain awful.

For Firebaugh, it seems that every year we are facing a water crisis. Only two years ago, our community was grappling with too much water and the threat of flooding because there was far too much San Joaquin River and Kings River runoff for existing reservoirs to handle. Well over one million acre-feet of water had to be flood-released, threatening Firebaugh with disaster that was, fortunately, averted. Last year and this year, by contrast, have been very dry, and now we have the Delta pumping restrictions added as well. This year's 40% water supply has led to hundreds of employees being laid off, farmers losing years of equity and investment, cities struggling to maintain some semblance of the status quo as they watch businesses closing, and bracing for the worst that is yet to come. Couple this with the petroleum crisis, the mortgage crisis, and the unrelated closure of major West Side employers due to foreign goods flooding the market and what Firebaugh has been handed isn't a recession, but a depression.

Our people are hearty. They have endurance. They are resilient. But only so much can be asked of them, especially to somehow adapt to and live with devastating economic circumstances over which they have no control. In Firebaugh, we continue to struggle and feel the pain resulting from a lack of decision making and lack of action by those in charge.

Nothing can prepare the most experienced local leader for calls or requests from desperate local people practically begging for opportunities to work. And not only are the negative effects economic. A social catastrophe is also in the making. Drive around Firebaugh on any hot summer day or evening and you will see families gathered under a

tree outside their home because they can ill afford to turn on their air conditioning. Choices are having to be made with increasing frequency between their health and electrical usage. This is heartbreaking to watch.

In talking to my police chief and the staff of Firebaugh's local crisis center, I became aware of a disturbing recent rise in domestic violence cases. The high stress and tension caused by the lack of water is taking a toll on families. They feel helpless over not being able to find a job and the uncertainty that the future holds. Alcohol abuse triggers violence. Our deputy local district attorney recently reported that the number of DUI's in Firebaugh is two to three times higher than average.

Our local job market is experiencing a phenomenon that I had never before witnessed. Red Rooster, a local fresh tomato packing company, recently advertised 150 seasonal jobs and approximately 700 people applied. What is even more intriguing is that fact that very skilled individuals, whom I would classify as over-qualified for such work, are competing for these lower-skill jobs. The eminent threat of a major sugar beet processor closing down in our area is more fact than fiction. The number of acres of sugar beets simply can't be sustained because of amount of water required to irrigate the crop is well in excess of the limited amount of water available on a consistent basis. Should this plant close we will see 25 local employees lose their highly-skilled, year-round jobs. A major dehydration processing plant that made powder out of garlic, onion and parsley went out of business two years ago. Several hundred jobs were lost. No one came to the rescue. This multi-million dollar facility remains unused.

Our region has rallied and come together looking for ways to help the needy, organizing food drives, fund raisers, and writing proposals for foundations and charitable organization in preparation for the worst that everyone believes is yet to come. It is a domino effect, and with each falling piece, more hope vanishes. I am seeing families that are normally self-sufficient having to sign up for food relief. The embarrassment can be seen in their eyes. It is sad. It is tragic. It is frustrating.

Our residents are desperate for jobs and very eager to work to carry on with their lives but once families lose hope, it is inevitable that we will see an exodus from the community. Our public school system is already seeing declining enrollment. For every 100 students who move out of the school district, a \$500,000 revenue loss results, in addition to any other loss in state funding as a result of California's budget crisis. The impacts are not limited to the public schools. A parochial school that has served Firebaugh for several decades has had to close because of declining enrollment and financial support, all directly attributable to the agricultural disaster resulting from water supply curtailments.

If there are not immediate solutions implemented to reverse this economic and social collapse, every aspect of my community will be in jeopardy – public safety, education and the economy. Pretending to move forward with this water crisis being left unresolved is unacceptable. The potential consequences, for Firebaugh, the valley, the state and even our nation, are too great.

It is no secret that the Delta is at risk, both environmentally and as a source of water for most of California's people, industry and agriculture. Delta Vision, like CalFed before it, represents an opportunity to forge lasting solutions.

To do so, the strategies conceived and recommended by Delta Vision must all give full regard for effects upon human life, social institutions and the economy, across the state and within Firebaugh and many similar communities. Ideas advanced and decisions made in this process must be fair in their application. The Delta and the water supplies that must pass through it should not and cannot be used as some sort of pawn that puts human beings and their already complex lives at economic and social risk as the ultimate price for environmental or species protection. Proposals and decisions for the Delta cannot be made simply to placate litigation-loving environmental plaintiffs or U.S. District Judges. Even U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger, whose decisions in the Delta smelt case have directly led to so much of the current crisis because his hands were legally tied by the Endangered Species Act, has stated, "It is up to the political branches of government, not the court, to solve the dilemma and dislocation created by the required application of the law."

In the invitation to testify so graciously extended by your Task Force, you asked for comments on the draft plan. I have few specifics to offer, because the draft plan and its myriad of proposals are beyond the resources of the City of Firebaugh to analyze in detail.

Let me offer a few general observations.

This draft plan certainly includes some admirable and lofty goals for resolving Delta problems. That's good.

Unfortunately, it also appears to be laying a foundation we have seen before – for months or years of endless studies by overlapping layers of state and federal agencies in which the victors are the bureaucracy and, no doubt, the attorneys. What California does not need is addition of yet another set of multiple layers of bureaucracy adding more regulation or administration to our already choked system of water management and decision-making. As I stated when I testified in January before the House Water and Power Subcommittee on the acute need to rewrite the Endangered Species Act, every state and federal agency needs to get off its bureaucratic high horses and streamline processes as much as possible to help local and regional water agencies make the most efficient use possible of water. People and communities all across the state – including the City of Firebaugh and its residents – need, and demand efficient decisions and actions to end these water supply impacts.

Delta Vision cannot allow its efforts to be steered by environmental community rhetoric that suggests the solutions to all of California's urban water supply ills is to be found in imposing conservation on agriculture – an industry which along the West Side has

already developed and is using the most efficient irrigation systems and farm water management to be found anywhere in the world.

Delta Vision absolutely must advance the ball for framing, adoption and approval of a statewide comprehensive water infrastructure plan, one that not only provides the tools needed to resolve the Delta's problems and water conveyance needs but which provides what is really needed to meet California's water supply needs – projects such as additional groundwater storage and, perhaps most importantly, new surface storage like Sites Reservoir in Colusa County. On our own river, the San Joaquin, the proposed Temperance Flat Reservoir above Friant Dam and Millerton Lake has the potential to provide a water supply and suitable water temperatures required for San Joaquin River and fishery habitat restoration as envisioned in the recent settlement of San Joaquin River litigation. Temperance Flat would also provide Firebaugh with what is now completely lacking – adequate San Joaquin River flood protection – while contributing positively to better water quality along the lower San Joaquin and in the Delta.

This Task Force would also do well to insist that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service do an adequate, but balanced, job in preparing a new biological opinion for Delta pumping. The finished product must be completed on time. It will be our hope that the Service can develop a new plan that will satisfy the Endangered Species Act's protections for the Delta smelt while minimizing or eliminating long-term reductions in Delta water exports.

I also have some concerns. I am concerned over what I understand is a concept for some sort of an overriding administrator – a “water czar”, if you will – and I am bothered by it. Whatever the Delta's solution, it cannot be based in some sort of super-agency or individual blessed with extraordinary power. Yes, the Delta has problems, but that does not justify any attempt at establish a governance structure in which a Delta tail somehow ends up with the power to wag the state water dog.

I am concerned over how Delta Vision proposes to reduce flood threats to the Delta. The strategies listed are to *reoperate the reservoir, inundate floodplains more frequently and increase flood conveyance capacity of the San Joaquin River by expanding and restoring floodplains*. In our area and along much of the West Side, that would require taking farmland out of production more frequently than the current naturally occurring 10 year flood cycle with corresponding economic harm to the region and community.

I am concerned with the draft plan's proposal for *comprehensive basin management*, which sounds like a thinly-veiled call for groundwater adjudication without a day in court.

Perhaps most of all I am concerned that the result of Delta Vision and your Task Force may turn out to become so burdened with bureaucracy and baggage that nothing gets accomplished. If that were turn out to be the case, all Californians – not just those of us in Firebaugh – will be the losers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

DROUGHT

The crisis of 2008 in Firebaugh and other rural communities of the San Joaquin Valley.

By Jose Antonio Ramirez

The year 2008 will be remembered as the year of the worst human and social crisis to occur on the west side of Fresno County, when small rural communities were dragged down by a series of economic, political and environmental problems generating serious effects within the population.

As many of the facts are already known, I would like to limit myself to relating part of these effects and how they affect the people in our community.

For some years now, drought has been a threat for the rural communities on the west side of Fresno County. Previously, in 2002, it was ordered by federal authorities that cultivation cease on 200,000 acres of land on the extreme west side of the county due the lack of water and drainage issues.

Because of this, production stopped on a wide strip of land. Land that is desolate, dead. And empty.

In the last couple of years, the lack of an abundance of water has also added to the problem. Even though it did not get to the point of being a drought, farmers have had to control the use of water. Finally, in June of this year, because of a judge's decision, this part of the Valley received only 40% of the normal amount of water. The reason? To protect the Delta Smelt from extinction.

The drastic reduction in the amount of water made many farmers abandon their crops or keep only those crops that require less water. This translated into the laying off of hundreds of agricultural workers in a region where unemployment is habitually 20%.

In just one month's time, unemployment rose to 35%, creating an immediate "domino effect", not only in Firebaugh but in other surrounding populations such as Mendota and Dos Palos. As a whole, 40 or 50 thousand people live in the most affected area.

Unemployment makes people consume less. We have noted in our community a serious decline in economic activity in businesses of all types – from supermarkets to car sales. Some businesses are already closing their doors.

Employment opportunities in the area are very limited. For example, when a new packing company in the area announced a short while back that they would be hiring about 150 people, more than 700 people applied! Normally, in cases such as this, only double the amount people (300) would apply.

In addition to this, the excessive increase in the price of gasoline is affecting the entire community. Our region, “the melon capital”, has problems selling this fruit now that many transportation companies refuse to transport the melons outside of this area out of fear of the costs.

Small companies, especially transportation companies, are suffering as a result of the price of gasoline and this only adds to the rural and water crisis which we are living.

Many families decided to go to other areas in search of work. This means that many children also have left. Schools then have fewer students. Because of this, the school district receives less funding. As a result, plans for special courses are put aside and there is a possibility that some teachers may lose their jobs.

For example, Saint Joseph parochial school in Firebaugh closed its doors due to the lack of students and donations.

Families that stay in their communities anxiously look for employment. They constantly call City Hall seeking help of every kind.

Despite the summer heat in the Valley, many people do not want to turn on the air conditioner in their houses out of fear of not being able to pay the electric bill, which in turn could affect the health of many people, specifically children and the elderly.

We are also becoming aware of other problems as well which are consequences of this situation. There has been a notable increase in the number of reported cases of domestic violence. And of alcoholism. For

example, at DUI checkpoints set up by the police, it has been proven that the level of alcohol consumption is much higher than normal.

“We have more cases of people with high stress levels and depression. What’s worse, many people cannot buy medication because they don’t have an income,” states Dr. Oscar Sablan, a family doctor from Firebaugh. “When we send them to clinics in other cities for studies and treatments, they don’t go because of the cost of gasoline.”

According to Dr. Sablan, due to budget cuts, the County’s medical programs are much more limited, to the point that there is a long waiting period for special studies.

We still do not know what consequences this situation will have on public health, but from what has been explained up to this point, we cannot expect anything positive.

We cannot do anything to change what has already happened, but together we can look for solutions.

For the short term, the declaration of “disaster area” would help the area receive state and federal funding. We need donations to help the people immediately.

For the long term, we need more companies to be established in the area to offer employment to our people. However, the most important factor would be to implement a state plan of public works in order to revive the economy.

Our infrastructure is old and could collapse at any minute. Bridges and dams need to be rebuilt. The most important public works projects of the state were carried out almost 50 years ago – such as the dams and aqueducts, for example.

We are facing new and difficult challenges with an old and worn infrastructure.

A state plan exists that the government supports and that consists of reservoirs, dams, irrigation canals, and cisterns that could resolve these types of problems (drought and reductions in the amount of water) that dramatically affect our communities.

This investment is necessary. For our people and for our economy.

Now is the moment to implement this plan. We need the support of the community to drive it forward. Between all of us we will get by.

SEQUÍA

La crisis del 2008 en Firebaugh y otras comunidades rurales del Valle de San Joaquín.

Por José Antonio Ramírez

El año 2008 será recordado como el de la peor crisis humana y social en el oeste del Condado de Fresno, cuando pequeñas comunidades rurales fueron arrastradas por una serie de problemas económicos, políticos y ambientales que generaron serios efectos en la población.

Como muchos de los datos ya son conocidos, quisiera limitarme a narrar parte de estos efectos y cómo afectan a los pobladores de nuestra comunidad.

Desde hace algunos años, la sequía era una amenaza para las comunidades rurales del oeste del Condado de Fresno. Previamente, en 2002, las autoridades federales ordenaron que unos 200,000 acres de tierra del extremo oeste del condado dejen de cultivarse debido al desgaste de las mismas.

De esta manera, una amplia franja de tierra dejó de producir. Tierra desolada, muerta. Y vacía.

En los últimos años se sumó el problema de la poca abundancia de agua. Si bien no llegó a ser una sequía, los agricultores debían controlar el uso del agua. Finalmente, en junio de este año, por decisión de un juez, esta parte del Valle recibirá solamente el 40 por ciento del caudal normal de agua. La razón? Proteger al Delta Smelt de su extinción.

La drástica disminución del caudal de agua hizo que muchos agricultores abandonen sus cultivos o mantengan solamente los que requieren menos

agua. Esto se tradujo de inmediato en el despido de cientos de trabajadores agrícolas en una region donde el desempleo es habitualmente 20 por ciento.

En apenas un mes el desempleo subió al 35 por ciento, creando un “efecto domino” inmediato no solo en Firebaugh sino en poblaciones aledañas, como Mendota, Dos Palos. En conjunto, en el area más afectada viven unas 40 ó 50 mil personas.

El desempleo hace que la gente consuma menos. Notamos en nuestras comunidades una grave disminución de la actividad económica en comercios de diversa naturaleza —desde supermercados hasta venta de carros. Algunos comercios ya están cerrando sus puertas.

Las oportunidades de empleo en la zona son muy limitadas. Por ejemplo, cuando una empresa empacadora nueva en la zona anunció hace poco que contrataria a unas 150 personas, mas de 700 solicitantes se presentaron! Normalmente, en casos como este se presentan quizá el doble de solicitantes (300).

Además, el aumento excesivo de la gasoline esta afectando a la comunidad en su totalidad. Nuestra region, “la capital del melon”, tiene problemas para vender esta fruta debido a que muchas empresas de transporte se niegan a llevar melons a otras regions por miedo a no poder recuperar el costo de la gasolina.

Empresas pequeñas, especialmente las dedicadas al transporte, estan sufriendo por los precios del combustible, lo que se suma a la crisis agrícola y del agua que estamos viviendo.

Muchas familias decidieron irse a otras areas en busqueda de trabajo. De esta manera, muchos niños también se van. Las escuelas tienen entonces menos alumnos. Por lo tanto, el Distrito Escolar recibe menos fondos y por lo tanto los planes de cursos especiales se están dejando de lado y es possible que algunos maestros pierdan sus trabajos.

Por ejemplo, la escuela parroquial San José, en Firebaugh, cerró sus puertas por falta de alumnos y de donaciones

Las familias que se quedan en sus comunidades buscan con ansiedad empleo. Constantemente llaman al Ayuntamiento pidiendo ayuda de cualquier tipo.

A pesar del calor del verano del Valle, muchas personas no quieren prender el aire acondicionado en sus casas por temor a no poder pagar la cuenta de la electricidad, lo cual pudiera afectar la salud de mucha gente, especialmente niños y ancianos.

Asimismo estamos presenciando otros problemas como consecuencia de esta situación. Están aumentando notablemente los casos denunciados de violencia domestica. Y de alcoholismo. Por ejemplo, en los retenes policiales para detección de conductors ebrios, se comprobó también que el nivel de alcohol consumido era mucho mayor al de costumbre.

“Tenemos el caso de más personas con alto nivel de estres y depresion. Lo que es peor, mucha gente no puede comprar medicinas porque no tienen ingresos”, asegura el Dr. Oscar Sablan, medico familiar de Firebaugh. “Cuando las enviamos a clinicas de otras ciudades para estudios y cuidados especiales, no van por el costo de la gasolina”.

De acuerdo al Dr. Sablan, debido a los recortes de presupuestos, los programas medicos del Condado estan mas limitados, al punto que para estudios especiales hay que esperar mucho tiempo.

Aun no sabemos las consecuencias que esta situación tendrá esta situación en la salud pública, pero por lo explicado hasta aqui no podemos esperar nada positivo.

No podemos hacer nada para cambiar lo ocurrido, pero si podemos buscar soluciones de manera conjunta.

A corto plazo, la declaración de “zona de emergencia” podrá ayudar a que la zona reciba ayuda estatal y federal. De manera inmediata necesitamos donaciones para ayudar a la gente.

A largo plazo, necesitamos que mas empresas se radiquen en el area para ofrecer empleos a nustra gente. Pero lo mas importante seria implementar un plan estatal de obras publicas para regenerar la economia.

Nuestra infraestructura es vieja y pudiera colapsar en cualquier momento. Puentes y represas requieren obras de remodelación. Las obras publicas mas importantes del estado se realizaron hace casi 50 años —represas y acueductos, por ejemplo.

Estamos enfrentando nuevos y dificiles desafios con una infraestructura vieja y desgastada.

Existe un plan estatal que el gobierno apoya y que consiste en obras de embalse, represas, canales de riego y depositos de agua que podrian resolver este tipo de problemas (sequía y reducciones de la cuota de agua) que afectan tan dramaticamente a nuestras comunidades.

Esta inversion es necesaria. Para nuestra gente y nuestra economia.

Es el momento de implementar este plan. Necesitamos el apoyo de la comunidad para impulsarlo. Entre todos lograremos salir adelante.